

ANNEX

THEISM WITHOUT CONTRADICTIONS?

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Two Great Wars marked the first half of the 20th Century, the Cold War between the Communist East and the American-European West molded the second half. Then as a century ended and the next began, arose the Islamic, Jewish, Protestant and Catholic fundamentalisms. Instead of battle dress, suicide-bombers, men, and now also women and children carrying bombs, spread death and destruction in the name of a supposedly merciful God. Conflicts increase, fundamentalists become increasingly religious, fanatical, destructive. This in life and in true history. In Philosophy, God died earlier. In Philosophy the 20th Century was born under the impact of the destruction of Metaphysics; God is dead, proclaimed Nietzsche, Reason lies in shards. The Logic Positivism of the Vienna Circle, the Atomism of Bertrand Russell, the plurality of the language games of Wittgenstein, and not last, the recurrent deconstructions of the Neonietscheans in France made scorched earth of Philosophy. Even Jürgen Habermas, such an illustrious author, such a great thinker, so interested in Ethics and Politics, states that we are in a post-Metaphysic era. Metaphysics or First Philosophy as it was called by Aristotle, the classics of the Middle Ages and of German Idealism, the wind of the century swept it away; what was left as a discipline of the ancient *corpus philosophicum* was only Ethics, the doctrine of Ought do be. All the other disciplines, that were formerly philosophical, if they indeed survived, should be placed side by side, on an

equal footing, with the same dignity and range, according to, Habermas¹. A universal science which hovers over the specific sciences and provides them with a foundation, is something that, although beautiful, is as obsolete as the ritual clothing of the Popes, and in the civilian world, the carriages pulled by white horses in front of the Sacher Hotel in Vienna. Also the God of previous eras was dethroned and reduced to a mere product of fertile human imagination; we live in the era of secularization, says even the Catholic Charles Taylor².

Where Philosophy recedes, scientists, especially from Biology and Physics advance. Philosophers no longer dare talk about Metaphysics, of First Philosophy, but the physicists are there, postulating, researching and constructing a *Great Unified Theory* (*GUT*) which was to unite relativity and quantum mechanics in a single theory valid for the whole universe. Further. They speak openly and shamelessly about a *Theory of Everything*,³ a theory about all and anything, i.e., a general theory of the universe. Physicists speak fearlessly, they write without great reservations, where we philosophers kept quiet over a century ago. Even more daring than the physicists are the biologists who, supported by the Neoplatonism and Neohegelianism of Ludwig von Bertalanffy⁴, elaborated the *General System Theory*⁴ as a general theory of the universe: based on this and with the same Neoplatonic assumptions we now have the Theories of Complexity, the theories about *Artificial Life*⁵, the theories about complex evolutionary systems, etc. Physicists and biologists do, indeed want to design a science which will explain not only the specific areas of knowledge, but also the whole Universe; they are

¹ J.HABERMAS. *Nachmetaphysisches Denken. Philosophische Aufsätze*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988.

² C. TAYLOR. *Secular age*. New York: Belknap, 2007.

³ Cf. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theory_of_everything

⁴ L. BERTALANFFY. *General System Theory. Foundations, Development, Applications*. New York: Brazilller, 1969.

⁵ C. ADAMI. *Introduction to Artificial Life*. New York: Springer, 1998.

doing Metaphysics right amidst the Post Metaphysical era⁶. Metaphysics with God? Or without God?

The intention of this work can be summed up in three very short questions: Does Metaphysics exist? With God? Without God? In the last thirty pages of *Beyond Hegel* I presented for critique by my readers, the proposal of a complex evolutionary system, or, using the same old terms, an Ontology, a Metaphysics, a *Theory of everything*. I am not making up something new, I am only performing a sober, and insofar as possible precise reconstruction of the Systems Theory interwoven with the Theory of Evolution. The same was done before me, during the 20th Century, by Bertalanffy⁷, Maturana⁸, Kapra⁹, Kauffmann¹⁰ and many others. Before them it was done by Plato, Plotinus, Proclus, Augustine, Giordano Bruno, Nicolaus de Cues, Spinoza, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. During the 20th Century, Teilhard de Chardin took up the Neoplatonic project again and implemented it in Christianity. On proposing and advocating a general theory of the universe, although in an always evolutionary form, I continue to advocate what formerly was called Metaphysics, or more precisely, Ontology. This system project, I wrote it, I published it in book form¹¹ and I will defend it as far as possible. Metaphysics, in its classical sense, however, includes a second very important issue. Does God exist? What is God? About this second core problem of all and any Metaphysics, even in post-Metaphysical times, there is no way the philosopher can remain silent. Either he affirms God, some God, or he denies all and any God; or he

⁶ Cf. S. HAWKING. *The universe in a nutshell*. London: Moonrunner, 2001

⁷ L. BERTALANFFY. *General System Theory. Foundations, Development, Applications*. New York: Brazilller, 1969.

⁸ R. H. MATURANA e G. F. VARELA. *El arbol del conocimiento*. Santiago: Editorial Universitária, 1984. idem, *The organization of the living: a theory of the living organization*. In: International J.Man – Machine Studies, nr. 17 (1975) p. 313-332.

⁹ F. CAPRA. *The web of life. A New Scientific Understading of Living Systems*. New York: Random, 1996.

¹⁰ S. KAUFFMANN. *The Origins of Order: Self-Organization and Selection in Evolution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

¹¹ C. CIRNE-LIMA. *Depois de Hegel. Uma reconstrução crítica do sistema neoplatônico*. Caxias do Sul: EDUCS, 2006.

intends to remain silent. But even silence is already an answer, yes, a negative answer. The relevance of the problem is here, wide open, in our political panorama and in our lives as intellectuals who are responsible, co-responsible in the fight against the irrationality of the religious fundamentalisms of our time.

In a first part I will present the argument of Thomas of Aquinas, as it is found in the *quaestio secunda* of article 13 in the first part of *Summa Theologica*¹²; in the second part I will reconstruct this argument according to the elements presented and partly formalized by Lorenz Puntel; in the third part I develop critical considerations which I consider relevant.

I

Thomas of Aquinas, in the second question of article 13, asks simply and directly whether God exists: *Utrum Deus sit*. It is here that, below, the *cinque viae* are presented, the five arguments which, according to Thomas, prove the existence of God philosophically. Summarizing the five proofs in key-words we have the following picture:

- 1) Movement exists. Ergo, something exists which is moved. Now, everything that is moved, is moved by a mover that is prior to it. If this is also something moved, it assumes, in turn that there is an element that moves it. And, since the series cannot be *ad infinitum*, it is necessary to accept the existence of a first mover which is itself immobile, and that is the first-last mover of the series of

¹² THOMAS DE AQUINO. *Summa theologiae*. (Edit. Leonina Roma 1888), edit. E. Alarcón, 2006. Cf. *Summa theologiae*. I, a. 13, q. 2.

movers and moved. This first mover that is not moved Thomas of Aquinas calls God.

- 2) There are causes and effects in the real world. Ergo, something exists that is effect. Now, any effect is caused by a cause which is prior to the effect. If this cause, in turn, is also caused, it assumes as previous to it a cause that will be its sufficient reason to exist instead of not existing. And since the series of causes cannot retreat (move backward) *ad infinitum*, there must be a first non-caused cause which is the first-last cause of the series of causes and effects that we see in the world. This uncaused cause, Thomas calls God.
- 3) Contingent beings exist in the real world. Ergo there is something than may exist or may not exist, but in fact exists. Now the contingent being, which may exist, but may also not exist, if and while it in fact exists, requires sufficient reason to exist instead of not existing. Ergo the contingent being demands as the ultimate condition of its possibility, the existence of a being that is necessary and no longer contingent. This necessary being, Thomas calls God;
- 4) Perfections exist in the real world. Ergo, there are a few perfect beings. But these perfections come to them from outside, they are caused by a first-last perfection which provides the foundation for and gives rise to the series of finite perfections. This first-last perfection Thomas calls God.
- 5) The real world presents as something that is rationally organized. Ergo, there is order, reason and intelligence (in this sense) in the world. Now, all reason and intelligence assume a first-last end that provides the foundation and supports the finite series of reasons and intelligences. This first-last intelligence, Thomas calls God.

It is perceived that Thomas, in this classical text, is not concerned about more specifically determining God; he will do this in several other equally classical places. For our counter-arguments, however, what was summarized above is sufficient if we add another central point of the Thomist doctrine, namely, the thesis that says that God is simple substance.

The counter-argument against the demonstrations presented by Thomas of Aquinas, and then after him, by almost all the Neothomist authors, refers to the concept of the free act in which and by which God decides freely to create the world. Both the simplicity of the substance of God as the free creation of a contingent and finite world are part of the hard core of the philosophy of Thomas and of our contemporary Neothomism. Neither the simplicity of the necessary being, nor the liberty of their option to create a contingent world can be denied, they say.

Now, is the act in which and by which God freely decides to create the world – he had the choice of not creating it – something internal or external to God? If the decision to create the world was an external act of God, God would not have freely created the world; the act from which the world originates causally, would be something external to God, something as a demiurge, a second-order God. But God, the God that is simple substance, would no longer be the creator of the world; the free act of creating, would be external to him. – If, turning the question around, we think the contrary and say that the free act of creating the world is internal to God, then this act is no longer free. Because the divine substance is simple and necessary. What is internal to God is, for that very reason, simple and necessary; there is no space there to choose freely between creating or not creating the world. The notion of simple substance and of being necessary – both fundamental points for Thomas of Aquinas' concept of God – are always in contradiction with the free act of creating or not creating the world.

Contemporary Thomists seek to avoid the objection presented above, distinguishing an action of God “inwards” from an action of God “outwards”. The free act by which God creates the world would then be necessary “inwards”, contingent “outwards”. This distinction, however, cruelly destroys the simplicity of the substance of God. God, according to this concept, would remain a substance underlying several “accidents” that could, but do not have to occur. And it is precisely this that Thomas does not want.

We all know this impasse we encounter in the demonstrations to prove the existence of God; we are all familiar with the issue, and with the many, actually frustrated attempts to provide an answer. That is also the reason why the thesis articulated by Lorenz Puntel¹³, which avoids the traditional scheme and presents new facets for argumentation and counter-argumentation, deserves special consideration.

II

Lorenz Puntel presents as the fundamental idea of his theory the totality of Being and its explanation. This, he clearly says, is a new systematic position. The defect of the Thomist arguments presented earlier, is that they are oriented towards particularism, “ in the sense that every time they begin with a specific phenomenon or an insufficiently universal factor, and based on this they raise a sort of metaphysical construction”¹⁴. They articulate “points” within the totality, and the latter is forgotten. “Precisely this fundamental flaw should be corrected by the new metaphysical position in the totality of Being”¹⁵. – Allow me to anticipate: so far I fully agree with Puntel.

¹³ L. B. PUNTEL. *A totalidade do Ser, o Absoluto e o tema “Deus”*: um capítulo de uma nova metafísica. In: G. IMAGUIRE, C. L. S. ALMEIDA, M. A. OLIVEIRA. *Metafísica contemporânea*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2007, p. 191-222.

¹⁴ *Ibidem* p. 199.

¹⁵ *Ibidem* p. 200.

What is this new totality of Being? Puntel defines the totality of Being based on the totality of the *universe of discourse*. The discourse, especially the discourse of Philosophy, is a universal, completely unlimited discourse. The universe of being co-extends to the universe of discourse. All that is or is possible in the universe of Being is or is possible also in the universe of discourse; and vice-versa. Both universes are unlimited. But the dualism that Kant places between both the universes cannot nor should be maintained; we are not operating only with a regulatory idea opposed by the objective world. No, the totality of being is a “datum”, it has “metaphysical dignity”¹⁶, “it is an element which is part of the structure and of the ontological status of our thinking”¹⁷, it is the “originary fact of our reason”¹⁸. – I still agree with Puntel.

This totality of Being presents different forms and degrees. There is an explanation of totality that is a) purely scientific-formal; b) scientific-empirical; c) philosophical¹⁹. The philosophical explanation may be: a) metaphysical-special (philosophy of the mind, social philosophy, etc); b) metaphysical-all embracing, as for instance the problem of God²⁰.

The author deploys his argumentation about the totality of Being, and within the latter, about the existence of God, in large steps. Because these are extremely clear we can reconstruct and critique them.

- 1) The first step of the demonstration: “The capture (or consciousness) of the totality of Being is given with the nature and structure of the human spirit”²¹. In the footnote, note 4, Puntel write: “Certainly, here a great problem arises. Every discourse about totality appears to be marked by insurmountable problems of

¹⁶ Ibidem p. 202.

¹⁷ Ibidem p. 202.

¹⁸ Ibidem p. 202.

¹⁹ Ibidem p. 205.

²⁰ Ibidem p. 206.

²¹ Ibidem p. 207.

logic, as Grim says he demonstrated, 1991. However, this issue cannot be discussed here. On this subject, see the very interesting discussion between the philosopher/theologist A. Plantinga, and the logician P. Grim (PLANTINGA/GRIM, 1993)”²². – I still fully agree.

- 2) The second step of the demonstration: “The totality of Being, or the totality of all beings (things) consists of an absolute (or absolutely necessary) dimension and a non-absolute, i.e., contingent dimension”²³. After explanations about the concepts of “absolute”, “necessary”, “absolutely necessary” and general considerations about modalities, Puntel begins to demonstrate this second step, which, as he himself says, is decisive. – Now I disagree.

For greater clarity, the six substeps of the demonstration are taken up again here, and summarized.

1. “If only contingent beings (things) existed, then also the totality of beings, the totality of Being, would be contingent. This statement appears to be immediately evident: actually (the concept) ‘totality of Being’ belongs to another category which is not that of (the concepts of) beings/things. But if the totality of Being consists exclusively of beings that have a contingent character precisely in relation to their being, then the totality of Being would not have another (precisely necessary) character”²⁴. The author articulates the same argument in a negative manner: “If someone, however, intends, on the one hand to advocate the thesis that all beings/things are contingent, and on the other hand, the

²² Ibidem p. 208. Here I add, see also SCHNEIDER, C. *Totalidades: um problema lógico-metafísico?* in: G. IMAGUIRE, C. ALMEIDA, M. OLIVEIRA, *Metafísica*, Petrópolis: Vozes, 2007, p.123-134.

²³ PUNTEL, ibidem p. 208.

²⁴ Ibidem p. 210.

thesis that the totality of Being has a necessary character, he would have to explain how there are, in a coherent form, contingent beings that would, exclusively, constitute a non-contingent totality”²⁵ (210). – I disagree, as I will explain below.

2. “If also the totality of “beings/things”, the totality of Being, were contingent, then perhaps not even the totality of Being nor any “being/thing” would have reached the Being; in other words, one would have to accept the possibility of *nihilum absolutum*”. – I agree with Puntel on the impossibility of a *nihilum absolutum*.
3. “The acceptance of *nihilum absolutum* implies the thesis that everything is contingent; with this it implies likewise another thesis, namely, that the beings (“things”) were able to ‘enter’ , pass into (the dimension) the Being coming from (the dimension of) *nihilum absolutum* – respectively that, indeed they entered/passed, since there already are ‘existing’ beings/things”²⁶. – I agree with the author regarding this item 3.
4. “The idea of a ‘passing’ from the dimension of *nihilum absolutum* to the dimension of Being is simply absurd: from nothing absolutely nothing ‘comes’ or ‘ happens’, from absolutely nothing , nothing ‘leaves’, and ‘enters’ the ‘space’ of the Being. – I fully agree.
5. “Since the thesis that everything is contingent implies an absurd consequence, it follows from this that not everything is contingent, i.e., that there is an absolutely necessary dimension”²⁷. – I partly agree.
6. “Since it is a fact that there are contingent ‘beings/things’, it should be concluded from the steps presented so far, that the totality of Being must

²⁵ Ibidem p. 210.

²⁶ Ibidem p. 210.

²⁷ Ibidem p. 210.

be understood as divided into two dimensions, as being doubly dimensional: while consisting of an absolutely necessary dimension and a contingent dimension ”²⁸. – I disagree, see further below.

Puntel summarizes the four steps in a clear, incisive form. “One can present the heart of the argument by summarizing: If all(all beings) were contingent, one would have to accept the possibility of *nihilum absolutum*. Now, *nihilum absolutum* is not possible. Ergo, all beings are not contingent, or in other words: then the totality of the being is not only qualified by the characteristic of contingency.”²⁹.

III

The author’s argumentation presents us with a great universe, the totality of Being, and within this, as “dimensions”, at least one absolutely necessary being, and the totality of contingent beings/things. Strictly speaking, Puntel works with the great and all-embracing totality of Being, and within this, with a subtotality that is the necessary being, and a second subtotality which is the totality of the contingent beings. In order to set up the argument, Puntel needs to distinguish these three totalities, or rather, a totality that is truly universal, and two subtotalities that are no longer universal. Neither one nor the other is universal and all embracing. Here, in my opinion, is the precise point where Puntel and I disagree.

Let us begin, however, with the problem that I consider most important, and on which the author and I fully agree: the universal and all-embracing totality of Being. If something is or exists, then it is necessary to have a really very universal totality.

²⁸ Ibidem p. 211.

²⁹ Ibidem p. 211.

Regarding this point, which is highly relevant, most of the contemporary authors, when they do not remain silent, disagree; the very notion of totality would imply insoluble antinomies of logic. Both Puntel and I agree and advocate the necessary acceptance of the universal and all-embracing totality of the Being. This first step of the argument is correct and valid; this is the beginning of all Metaphysics. (Puntel, beginning with *nihilum absolutum* , elegantly formalized the evidence.³⁰).

The disagreement between the author's thesis and my position concerns the construction elaborated in a triadic form: within the truly universal totality of Being there are two subtotalities, that of the necessary being and of the contingent beings. In my terminology the formulation would be as follows: According to Puntel there is a great universal and all-embracing system, and within it two subsystems that he calls "dimensions", the subsystem of the necessary being and the subsystem of the contingent beings. Now, here there is clearly an unnecessary and mistaken multiplication of entities. It is not necessary to distinguish and separate the very universal totality of Being from the totality of the necessary being. Why? For what? How?

At this precise point in the system, I introduce the System Theory, which renders account of the totality and subtotalities, and the Theory of Evolution, which engenders the subtotalities and orders them in the great and universal totality. I believe that there is, thus, a large very universal system, which is identical to the totality of Puntel's Being, and that this system engenders within itself subsystems that are the contingent beings. The system, the large totality, is the whole, the contingent subsystems are parts of this whole. The whole as a whole is necessary, its parts are contingent. Puntel's contingent beings/things in my system design are subsystems engendered within the

³⁰ Ibidem p. 216.

universal whole; the whole, the large, truly universal system of Being gives birth to the contingent and finite subsystems as parts within itself.

What is the difference? Puntel works with three elements: a) the totality of Being; b) the necessary being; c) the totality of the contingent beings. I work only with the first and third element. But these differences, which are profound and cannot be ignored, go much more radically to the heart of the problem of a new First Philosophy, and therefore they should be rendered more clearly explicit. There are three fundamental points in the backdrop, about which the author and I disagree:

- 1) Years ago, at the request of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Philosophie* or a similar organization, Puntel prepared a report on System Theory. According to him System Theory was so vague, imprecise and superficial, that it did not merit academic support; furthermore, it was a false theory. – This is one of the reasons why Puntel does not manage to think adequately about totality with its two subtotalities. I consider System Theory as one of the most important Neoplatonic theories of the 20th Century. I know about the abuses, I know the extreme fragility of many of its defenders; I think it is regrettable that such an important theory has been relegated to the status of low vulgarization and even self-help literature. But, I insist on the importance and correctness of the System Theory, when and if appropriately expounded. I refer to pages 156-178 of *Beyond Hegel*. System theory, in my view, is the contemporary form of the Neoplatonic doctrine on the Multiple and the One.
- 2) Puntel ignores the Theory of Evolution, at least as a major element within a new Metaphysics. The system, in Puntel, for that very reason lacks the indispensable internal dynamism. The only moving force appears to be the necessary being,

God's will to create. – In my system design, the Theory of Evolution – combined with the System Theory, has the function of engendering all the contingent subsystems that exist within the totality of Being. The Being, as the whole, is necessary and immobile “ad extra”, already because there is nothing outside the large universal and all-embracing system. The Being, inwards, is the universal system that is always engendering new subsystems inside itself, which, in turn, engender subsystems of subsystems. Everything organized by the coherent Law of Identity, also called Law of natural selection.

- 3) Puntel, about the issue of the whole and the part, writes: “The expression “whole”, respectively ‘totality’, has a strongly naturalized connotation of ‘part(s)’. If one wishes to consider this connotation mandatory, one reduces ‘all/totality’ to a sum of parts. As will be seen, the totality of Being cannot be conceived as a sum of beings taken as parts. From this perspective, these expressions are not appropriate. But the connotation for ‘sum’ is neither the only nor the most important connotation of ‘all/totality’, at least while these expressions are philosophically understood, and perhaps, in connection with the Being. Showing this is the task of explaining the totality of Being, undertaken here.”³¹. – In my opinion, Puntel did not manage to show what he wanted, since the totality of the Being that he advocate contains two dimensions which are not identical to the own, first and only truly universal totality. In my terminology I would say that the large universal system is the universal, all embracing totality; this for me is the whole. This large system engenders and does indeed contain within itself contingent parts that are subsystems. What for a *tertium quid*? It is

³¹ Ibidem p. 200-201.

precisely therefore that the whole is not only a sum of its parts; it is therefore that the whole is necessary and its parts are contingent.

Having highlighted the differences that separate Puntel's theses from my philosophical convictions, I would like to congratulate the author on his clear writing, and for his courage to face the great problems of our philosophical tradition. Without this intellectual courage, our Philosophy, as says Habermas, leaves the place that it has always occupied and is relegated to the same status as a particular science. This is not what we want. We need to realize that, even in this short discussion, we delve deeply into the new and always old First Philosophy. With the considerations presented above about the Absolute, we are in the hard center of Plato's unwritten doctrine, in the doctrine for those who remain inside, in the doctrine for the initiated. We are in the second navigation in its highest sense. There is a great universal and all-embracing system, which is the whole. This system, by force of dialectical tension, must be at the same time one and three, i.e., configured as thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The universal system, because it is dialectical, is one and three. Plato is also right in *Timeus*, when he says that the universal system is life, is intelligence. Now, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, then – being life and intelligence – can only be *phílesis*, *antiphílesis* and *philía*: A totality in three relations that are constituted without breaking down the unity and unicity of the universal system. *Philía*, however, is a good, *bonum*, and all good is diffuse: *bonum diffusivum sui*. *Philía* is the freedom that constitute itself as being free, *causa sui*. And that is why the system freely engenders contingent subsystems in itself³². This is the unwritten doctrine, the doctrine for the insiders.

³² À gratuidade da *philía*, por um lado, corresponde a contingência dos entes contingentes, pelo outro lado. Cf. Depois de Hegel, p. 167 ss.

For the outsiders, for the beginners, in the terminology of esoteric doctrine, then arise myths, legends, gods, god, creation, etc. That is how religions are born.